

Guru Nanak: The Evolution of the Guru Tradition in Sikhism

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ABSTRACT

Guru Nanak was one of the first ten Sikh gurus. Guru Nanak's teachings on unity, equality, and devotion deeply formed Sikhism and the Bhakti movement. The paper highlights the Nirvana is the absolute, supra-mundane experience. Guru Gobind Singh reasserted the idea of equality. The paper stressed that the path to spiritual awakening and enlightenment involves deep devotion, and understanding. The paper focused that we earn by honest labour and share the earnings with the needy. He advocated the concept of "dasvandh" or donating one-tenth of one's earning among needy persons. The selfless service to mankind known as "Seva" is central to the teaching of Sikhism. Guru Nanak's philosophy highlighted gender equality, recognizing the equal spiritual potential of both men and women.

Keywords: Sikhism, Nirvana, Equality, Liberation, Religion, Spiritual God and Knowledge

INTRODUCTION

Guru Nanak is the founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak was an Indian religious and spiritual teacher and the creator of Sikhism. Sikhism, founded on the Nanak's mantra of Ik Onkar (one God), it is a monotheistic religion unification the influences of Hinduism and Sufi Islam. His teachings are embodied in Guru Granth Sahib and are very relevant in contemporary times when humanity is passing through all shades of serious conflicts. In Sikhism, the word 'Guru' has a very specific definition. It means the decent of divine guidance to mankind provided though ten Enlightened Masters.

The honour of being called a Sikh Guru is applied only to the ten Gurus who founded the religion starting with Guru Nanak in 1469 and ending with Guru Govind Singh in 1708. The divine spirit was passed from one Guru to the next, in the words of Guru Nanak, as "The light of the lamp which lights another does not abate. Similarly a spiritual leader and his disciple become equal" (Bhattacharya, 30) after the ten Gurus, the word Guru is referred to the Sikh Holy Scriptures the Guru Granth Sahib. Nirvana involves the relinquishment of all needs;

termination in the end of suffering and eventual liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

Guru Nanak Sahib, the founder of Sikhism was born in 1469 on full moon day of the month karthik-at Rai-Bho-di talwadi in the present district of Shekhupura(Pakistan), now Nanakana Sahib. Born to Mehta Kalyan Das and Mata Tripta, Nanak, had an elder sister, Nanki, who always cherished her younger brother. At a young age of seven, Nanak learnt Hindi and surprises his teachers with the sublimity of his extraordinary knowledge about divine things. At the age of thirteen, he learned Persian and Sanskrit and at the age of 16. Married to Mata Sulakhi ji, Nanak had two sons, Sri Chand and Laxmi Das.

However, it was not until august 1507, that Guru Nanak Sahib heard God's call to dedicate himself to the service of humanity after bathing in vein, a small river near Sultanpur Lodhi. He was 38 then. The very first sentence uttered by him then was, "There is no Hindu, no Musalman" (Anand Coomaraswamy, 41). Soon, he undertook long travels to preach his unique and divine doctrine (Sikhism). After visiting different places in Punjab, he proceeded on four long tours called Udasis covering different religious places in India and abroad. In the process, he awakened the people to realize the truth about God and introduced Sikhism. He established " Manjis", network of preaching centers and appointed able and committed followers as its head. Thus, the seeds of Sikhism were sown all over India and abroad.

Guru Nanak Sahib rejected the path of renunciation, the authority of the Vedas and the Hindu caste system. He emphasized on the leading of householder's life (Grista), unattached to gross materialism. He preached new idea of God as Supreme, Universal, and All- powerful and truthful. God is formless (Nirvana), the sole, the Creator, the self-existence, the Incomprehensible and the Ever-Lasting and the creator of all things (Karta Purakh). God is infinite, all knowing, True, All -giver Nirvair, and Omnipotent. He is Satnam, the Eternal and Absolute Truth.

As born poet, Guru Nanak Sahib wrote 947 hymns which were later included in Guru Granth Sahib settled down at Kartarpur city (now in Pakistan), founded by him in 1522 and spent the rest of his life there. There was daily Kirtan and the institution of Langar(free kitchen) was

introduced. In 1539, he installed Bhai Lehna ji (Guru Agand Sahib) as the second Nanak, and after a few days passed into Sachkhand on 22nd September 1539.

Nirvana in Classical Hindu scriptures; in the Mahabharata and Kaya Literature the word Nirvana is used sense: immersed, plunged, immovable, final emancipation from matter and re-union with the Supreme Spirit. “ In the Upanishads it does not mean the dying out of anything, but rather perfect self realization; to those in who the darkness of ignorance has been dispersed by perfect knowledge”, as the highest, Nirvana(Chandogaya Upanishad 8, 5,1). In the Gita the word ‘Nirvana’ is used for the highest spiritual state of peace which is “Serene and fearless, firm in the vow of celibacy, subdued and harmonized in God, intent on God alone”. (Bhattacharya, 31) The Yogin of Subdued mind, ever keeping himself thus harmonized, attained peace , the supreme Nirvana, which abides in Me” 9 Gita: 15).

Nirvana in Jainism: Jainism is older than Buddhism and it is Jainism the word began to be used in the sense of annihilation. For the Jains it is an escape from the body. The energy of past karma is extinguished and the spirit though still existent, has no chance of re-embodiment it is annihilation of the self from samsara, mundane existence. Nirvana in Buddhism, what is Tao to the Chinese mystic, Fana to Sufi, Nibbana is to the Buddhist,. There are tests which suggest that deliverance is annihilation. Nanak is said to have travelled far and wide across Asia teaching people the message of Ik Onkar (‘One God’), who dwells in every one of his creations and constitutes the eternal Truth” (Hayer, Tara 1988:14)

‘Nirvana in Sikhism: Buddhism has used only one term, Nirvana to express the state of release. Different schools of Buddhism express the meaning with variations in interpretations. The Sikh Gurus were extremely liberal in the use of language, and they took up terms from various languages and dialects to interpret their meanings and thoughts. They have used, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Appabrames Braj, avadhi, Persian and all dialects of Punjab to express their mystic experiences. For the highest spiritual state they used to following terms besides Nirvana;

“ Param-pad: supreme state
 Agampura: unfathomable city
 Bagumpura: City of no woes.
 Gangapura: heavenly city
 Abchala Nagar: the eternal city
 Dev-Asthana: the abode of Gods
 Sunya – Mandal: the realm of silence
 Unman Avastha: super conscious state: over mind state
 Sach –khand: realm of truth
 Dasm –asthan: the tenth seat of consciousness
 Brahma avastha: the state of godliness
 Dargah: heavenly court,

Ram Rajya; kingdom of god
 Sahajya pad: the state of tranquility and spiritual balance
 Turayjya: fourth state: transcendent state.
 Nirbhai pad: fearless state,
 Mukta –pad; the state of release”

The Sikh Guru takes us out of the linguistic multiplicity of terms into the unicity of the highest spiritual goal. The different interpretations are also due to lack of the fullness of experience, and attempts to give intellectual interpretation without the complete intuitional knowledge of the highest state. The experience who describes Nirvana from the foothills naturally differs from those who describe from the peak of the heights of experience. Nirvana in Sikhism is thus a living experience of the spirit of God in man. It is the last fruit and consummation of the highest perfection attainable to man. It is an inner grasp on immortality as opposed to darkness and death, and a personal communion with Truth and Beauty.

Guru Nanakuses the word sunya and unmani for the highest spiritual state. Other Sikh Gurus have used almost all the words for the highest state of release given in the foregoing list. But Guru Tegh Bahadur exclusively uses Nirvana (nirbhana) and identifies it with the state of fearless (nirbhan pada), and the state of release (mukti-pada). This is not without reason or significance. It is to highlight this fact that the author has given the sub-title ‘Divine Songs of Nirvana’ to this translation of the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Why songs? Because all the hymns are strung to Ragas (musical modes) , the musical excellence of which will be discussed presently. “With this concept, he would set up a unique spiritual, social, and political platform based on equality, fraternal love, goodness, and virtue” (Sidhu, Dawinder 2009:26) Nirvana in Sikhism is not extinction of the flame called life, but it is a sublime experience, an exaltation of self and perfect communion with God. With this realization, the seeker of truth not only attains illumination of the highest wisdom but also complete freedom from fear and mundane authority and identity of the self with all human beings. In Sikhism Nirvana is not mere abolition of desire during life and karma after death. It is the stoicism of action in which instead of turning inwards and closing, the soul could open wide its gates to a universal love. This is now Guru Nanak redefines sunya in the light of his experience “ sunya(External silence) is the power of the infinite. Air, water, fire and all elements are created out of sunya. Out of sunya emerged. Brahma, attains sunya becomes perfect. His doubts and delusion are dispelled.” (Bhattacharya, 33)

According to Plotinus and many schools of Indian mysticism “action is a weakening of contemplation. It was granted to him (Plotinus) look upon the Promised Land, but not to set foot upon the soil. He went as far as ecstasy, a state in which the soul feels itself, or thinks it feels itself, in the Presence of God, being irradiated with His light; he

did not get beyond this last stage; he did not reach the point where, as contemplation is engulfed inaction, the human will become one with the divine will” (John Herman, 23) In Sikhism the state of Nirvana is an all absorbing state of boundless joy. God is there and the soul is in God. Mystery is no more. Problems vanish and darkness is dispelled, everything is flooded with light. The man who attains Nirvana state feels truth flowing into the soul from the fountain-head like an active force. He can no more help spreading it abroad than the sun can help diffusing its light. For the love which consumes him is no longer simply the love of man for man god, it is the love of God for all men. Though God, in the strength of God he loves all mankind with divine love. It was this love mankind that impelled Guru Tegh Bahadur to sacrifice his life for the freedom of worship of the Brahmanism although he did not agree with their mode of worship of the deity. It was this love of mankind arising out of this higher mysticism of action that inspired Guru Govind Singh to take up the sword against tyranny and despotism.

Though God, in the strength of God, the Guru Govind Singh to take up the sword against tyranny and despotism. Though God, in the strength of God, the Guru loves all mankind with a divine love. It was a mysticism and faith that moved mountains and within a century to the two made glorious history.

CONCLUSION

Guru Granth Sahib. • It is the holy book of the Sikhs. It contains hymn of six of the ten Sikh Gurus apart from several holy men coming from the Hindu. Nanak was also a social reformer and Nirguna Bhakti saint. Guru Nanak’s wisdom and philosophy are important for living a righteous existence. In today’s prejudiced world, his philosophy, based on liberty equality and fraternity. He believed that God dwell in everybody and that all humans are equal, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and gender. He was the guru of the Sikh religion and is known for his well-mannered and self-effacing nature. Here is a quick sight of his teachings and life.

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